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HOUSEKEEPERS' CHAT

Friday, November 5, 1937.

(FOR BROADCAST USE ONLY)

Subject: "THE PUMPKIN AND SQUASH, VEGETABLE RELATIVES." Information from the Bureau of Home Economics, U. S. Department of Agriculture.

--ooOoo--

Today I'm going to talk of a vegetable that I'm sure you've recited poems about since you were a youngster. I'm going to devote today's broadcast to the pumpkin. Or is it "punkin'" to you? And of course I shall also mention the winter squash, first cousin to the pumpkin.

Or maybe it's a first cousin once removed. Anyway the pumpkins and squashes are both branches of the Cucurbitaceae family according to the botanists. The family resemblance between the two is even more marked because they have intermarried so much. They look somewhat alike. They have similar food value. And you store and cook both of them in the same ways.

Just to set you at your ease now, I'll promise that I'm not going to recite any poems about pumpkins. I tried that the other day. You know the poem by James Whitcomb Riley, the one that goes--"it sets my heart a clickin' like the tickin' of a clock, when the frost is on the punkin' and the fodder's in the shock".

Well I quoted that to the wrong person. The man was a storage expert. He said, "That's all very well if you just want pumpkins to look at. But if you want to eat them or store them, then you'd better keep pumpkins quite a bit warmer than freezing".

Now of course I hadn't really taken Mr. Riley literally. I'm quite sure he wasn't thinking seriously about the storage of pumpkins when he wrote those famous lines. And even if he had been, there's always the poetic license excuse to fall back on. But anyway I didn't know just how cold or how warm pumpkins and squashes should be kept.

According to this storage expert, pumpkins and squashes are like sweet-potatoes. They want to be in a fairly warm place. They really like a temperature of about 55 degrees Fahrenheit, but they do keep all right up to about 70 degrees. And you need to keep them dry.

That's about the situation you'd have in your basement near the furnace. Or in an unused room. Or in a warm cellar. This man suggested that a shelf in any of these places would be a good storage spot.

And he told me another surprising thing about pumpkins and squashes. They're not at all the bold, hardy vegetables that their bright appearance suggests they are. Beneath that brave exterior they're very sensitive. If you handle them roughly or move them around a lot, they're liable to bruise and get cuts in them. These cuts invite decay.

If you're buying pumpkins and squash or just picking the best ones from your own crop, here are some ways to tell the good ones. Lift them! Feel them! Look at them! Lift them to see that they are heavy for their size. Feel them to see that the rind is hard. And look at them to see that they have no damp or watersoaked places.

If you buy good ones and store them properly you'll have fresh pumpkin and squash throughout the winter. And of course that means plenty of good, spicy pumpkin pie.

Since you have the fresh pumpkin you'll want to prepare it so that you can preserve all you can of this fresh flavor. A good way to do this is to cook it in a small amount of water until the pieces are tender. Then put the pulp in a double boiler with the lid left off. This will let the excess moisture evaporate without scorching the pumpkin.

Or if you have a pressure cooker let it do the work for you. Wash the pumpkin. Peel it. Then cut it into cubes about 1 to 1-1/2 inches thick. Add just a little water and let the pumpkin heat clear through. Then pack it into hot glass jars. Add 1 teaspoon of salt to each quart of pumpkin. Cover with the water you cooked it in.

Then put these hot-packed jars into your pressure cooker and process. If you have the pumpkin in quart jars you'll need to process it for about 75 minutes at 15 pounds pressure. In this way the canner takes care of the cooking. And in addition, you have the pumpkin in shape to keep.

One friend of mine always fixes her pumpkins ahead of time. Then she keeps a supply of it in the refrigerator. She says it takes such a long time to prepare it that she can't stop to fix it when she feels the urge to create a pumpkin pie.

And her pies are creations. When she serves little individual pumpkin pies with cider at her fall parties her guests always ask for the recipe. She says that she uses 1/2 cup sugar, 1 cup milk, and 1-1/2 cups pumpkin pulp to each pie. I'll repeat that. One-half cup sugar, 1 cup milk, and 1-1/2 cups pumpkin pulp to each pie. In other words twice as much milk as sugar and 3 times as much pumpkin pulp as sugar. And of course she also uses 2 eggs to each pie.

Another thing that makes her pies top-notch is the fact that her crusts are never soggy. She bakes the crust and heats the pumpkin mixture before she combines them. Personally, I like per particular choice of spices. She uses cinnamon, allspice, and mace.

But probably you have your own favorite spice combinations. Some persons like a little cider added. Others like pumpkin chiffon pie, where gelatin is added to make the filling fluffy.

You can make squash pie just as you do pumpkin. Or you can bake squash as an extra vegetable. It's very little trouble to bake and is especially good served hot.

Pumpkins and squash, in addition to being very good to eat, have two other virtues. They are both good sources of vitamins A and B. And they help brighten a winter table with their golden color.

